

What is Claimed:

1. A workflow system comprising:  
operating computer terminals executing a workflow;  
and  
a workflow server connected with said operating computer terminals through a network to manage the workflow, wherein said workflow server consolidates information necessary for processing multiple consecutive nodes to be processed by one participant operating one of said operating computer terminals and sends the consolidated information to the operating computer terminal.
2. The workflow system of Claim 1, wherein when a form to be circulated in the workflow reaches a first one of the multiple nodes to be processed by the participant, said workflow server consolidates information necessary for the participant's determination and sends the consolidated information to the operating computer terminal.
3. The workflow system of Claim 1, wherein the operating computer terminal sends said workflow server results of work performed by the participant based on the information sent from said workflow server.
4. A workflow system according to claim 3, wherein said workflow server performs individual processing on each of the multiple nodes based on the results of work performed by the participant and sent from the operating computer terminal to advance the workflow.

5. A workflow server connected with multiple computer terminals to manage a workflow comprising:

means for storing a definition of nodes assigned to respective participants performing a workflow;

means for determining a range of consolidating multiple consecutive nodes to be processed by one participant in the workflow;

means for acquiring from said means for storing work items selectable for each node within the consolidation range determined by said means for determining a range of consolidation; and

means for consolidating the work items acquired by said means for acquiring to provide the participant with consolidated information.

6. A workflow server according to claim 5, wherein:  
the definition of nodes includes information relating to access permission to each field at each of the nodes; and

said workflow server further comprises highest-level access permission acquiring means for acquiring from said storage means the highest level of access permission to each field within the consolidation range determined by said consolidation range determining means.

7. A workflow server according to claim 6, wherein:  
said means for storing stores a layout definition of a form used for time of one participant's continuous activities; and

providing means provides the participant with a form formatted based on the form layout definition acquired from said means for storing and a field access permission acquired

from said highest-level access permission acquiring means.

8. A workflow engine connected with multiple computer terminals to manage a workflow comprising:

- consolidation range determining means for determining a range of consolidating multiple consecutive nodes to be processed by one participant in the workflow;
- access permission setting means for setting access permission to each field at each node within the consolidation range determined by said consolidation range determining means;
- selectable work acquiring means for acquiring work items selectable for each node within the consolidation range determined by said consolidation range determining means;
- form generating means for generating a form based on the access permission set by said access permission setting means and the work items acquired by said selectable work acquiring means; and
- form sending means for sending the participant the form generated by said form generating means.

9. A workflow engine according to claim 8, wherein when there are multiple work items selectable for a certain node, if one of routes determined for respective work items contains all other routes, said consolidation range determining means determines the other routes contained in the one route as the consolidation range.

10. A workflow engine according to claim 8, wherein when there are multiple work items selectable for a certain node, if routes determined for respective work items have no

inclusion relationship with one another, said consolidation range determining means determines common part of the routes as the consolidation range.

11. A workflow engine according to claim 8, wherein said access permission setting means sets the highest level of access permission of the participant to each field defined on the form for each node as the access permission upon consolidation.

12. A workflow process consolidation method for consolidating work items for each of multiple nodes assigned in a workflow to one participant operating a computer terminal connected to a network, said method comprising the steps of:

- determining the range of consolidating multiple consecutive nodes to be processed by the participant based on a workflow definition stored in a storage device;

- acquiring work items selectable for each node within the determined consolidation range from the workflow definition stored in the storage device; and

- consolidating the acquired selectable work items, generating consolidated information, and providing the participant with the consolidated information through the network.

13. A workflow process consolidation method according to claim 12, wherein when there are multiple work items selectable for a certain node, some routes in all the routes determined for respective work items, which are contained in one route, or common part of all the routes is

determined in said consolidation range determining step as the consolidation range.

14. A workflow process consolidation method according to claim 12 further comprising the steps of:  
determining the highest level of access permission to each field within the consolidation range from the workflow definition stored in the storage device; and  
acquiring the layout definition of a form to be provided to the participant from the workflow definition, wherein  
a form as consolidation information is generated in said consolidation information providing step based on the access permission and the layout definition.

15. A workflow process consolidation method according to claim 12 further comprising the steps of:  
receiving results of work performed by the participant on the consolidated information; and  
storing in the storage device the participant's inputted field values and the participant's selected work from the received results of work.